THE ETHICS OF GOTAMA BUDDHA.

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THE ETHICS

OF

GOTAMA BUDDHA.

AN APPRECIATION AND A CRITICISM.

BY THE

REV. C. H. S. WARD.

5/8/95

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The papers which make up the contents of this pamphlet were first published in the "Ceylon Independent," and are now republished by the courtesy of the Editor of that paper. The interest and attention roused by their appearance in the newspaper amply justify their republication in pamphlet form.

The Rev. C. H. S. Ward is a Wesleyan Missionary who has laboured in this Island for over twenty years in the South Ceylon District, where Buddhism prevails, and especially in the Southern Province, where Buddhism has been most active and aggressive. He has had the fullest opportunities (which, as may be seen, he has well used) of studying Buddhism, and of observing its effects upon the life and thought of the people. He has also read widely in the recognized expositions of Buddhist teaching, and some of the results of his study are set forth in these papers. His earlier pamphlet, on "Karma and Re-birth," shews the accuracy of his insight into the inner spirit of Buddhism, and it is hoped that this new work will be carefully read and considered, not by Buddhists only but by all who are interested in the study of non-Christian Creeds. A Sinhalese version of this work has already been published.

Mr. Ward was away from the Island, on furlough, while this work went through the press, and the proofs have not had the advantage of his revision. He must not, therefore, be held responsible for any errors that may possibly have been overlooked, though all possible care has been taken to prevent errors or any misrepresentation of the author's views.

J. S. De S.

Kandy, 26th June, 1923.

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The Ethics of Gotama Buddha.

AN APPRECIATION AND A CRITICISM.

CHAPTER I.

The Influence of Pessimism upon Gotama Buddha's Life and Teaching.

Gotama Buddha was both a practical teacher of ethics and a speculative thinker. This is the explanation of much that appears incompatible, or contradictory in his teaching, because his moral system is the joint product of his own personal experience and observation, and of his speculative thought. Let us continually bear this in mind and it will tend to clearness of thinking.

We are not at present concerned with the specific moral precepts of the Buddha—for these are not peculiar to his system but are common to all teachers of morals in civilised communities—but rather with *the underlying principles of his Ethical System, i e. with the ultimate motives of conduct.*

It has been suggested already that Gotama's moral teaching was profoundly influenced by his own experience of life. Therefore, if we would understand his Ethics, we must first enter into sympathetic communion with his spirit as he faced

the appalling problems of existence. Only in so far as we are able to share his standpoint, and to view the world through his eyes, and to feel the anguish of soul which drove him from "home" to "homelessness," can we hope to understand the teachings of his later life. But even this is not sufficient for a true understanding of the Teacher; there must be added to it intellectual sympathy—a knowledge of his philosophy and the ability to consider it without impatience. It is in such a spirit that we approach this problem, and it is our desire to study it with an open mind, and without bias.

Moral and intellectual sympathy with the Buddha essential to our enquiry.

The main facts of the life of Gotama are so well-known, that there is no need to repeat them here. It is enough to remind the reader that he was a man of noble family, and that he enjoyed every advantage of education and culture available in his country and age. Moreover, he was surrounded by those comforts and pleasures of life, which are supposed to produce happiness. In point of fact, however, while still a youth, his mind appears to have become tinged with a gentle melancholy, which gradually deepened into a dark and gloomy pessimism.

The Buddha's early life and environment.

This may be accounted for partly by the conditions of his daily life, but chiefly through the influence of the prevailing philosophy upon his mind and heart. Pessimism was wide-spread amongst the noble families of India in Gotama's days. The life they lived palled upon them, and, at a comparatively early age, they became sated with physical pleasures. Moreover, for the most

past, these "sons of noble houses" had no serious duties, and there was little incentive or scope for ambition. Life ceased to provide new sensations, and they soon came to feel that it was sucked dry and worthless. It is a significant fact that Pessimism (or "World-Sorrow") is, in all ages and lands, a malady of the rich, or at least of the well-to-do, who are raised above the fear of poverty and want. The poor, even those whose life is one long struggle for existence, are strangers to this disease. Their lives are too strenuous and active for its germs to find a fruitful soil in them. On the contrary, the poor believe that life has an abundance of good things and, while keenly enjoying the small share that falls to their lot, they live in the hope of some day obtaining more. If you would find Pessimists—the "Heart-weary" and the "World-weary"—you must search for them amongst the leisured classes, and not amongst the workers or even the destitute. This was true of India in Gotama's day, and it is true of civilised society now, both in India and in other lands. However, whilst that is true, the real root from which sprang this bitter fruit of Pessimism, upon which Gotama, and the men of his class fed, and which poisoned their life and thought, is to be found in the current philosophy of their age. The joyous belief of the early Aryans of India in gods who loved men, and wished them to be happy on earth, and to enjoy even greater happiness in future heavens, had been obscured by the gloomy theory of Karma and Transmigration—the belief that all living beings are bound upon the "Wheel of Life," from which there is no hope of

Pessimism a malady of the leisured classes.

Pessimism is a malady of Philosophy.

escape, because, while they are working off their Karma (i.e. the results of deeds done in former lives), they are producing *fresh* Karma, which will have to be suffered in future lives, and so on throughout eternity. We are not surprised that men who accepted this philosophy regarded life as a great evil—sorrow and misery without end. Of what value was a single individual life under these conditions? In the vast ages through which the dread "Wheel of Existence" turned, its duration could scarcely be reckoned as even a moment of time. And apart altogether from the thought of duration, a life controlled down to its smallest details by Karma, and that life only one of a series of myriads of past and future lives similarly controlled, was too infinitesimal and insignificant to give opportunity for effective work. This theory of life, amongst those who had time to think about it and to brood upon it, tended to produce a spirit of apathy and hopelessness which paralysed the centres of thought and action. Noble aspiration, and a desire for practical service, could scarcely exist in such an atmosphere. Under these conditions, and enveloped in this atmosphere, Gotama grew up. He was evidently a very thoughtful youth much given to meditation and introspection, so there is no wonder that he came to regard life in all its forms as an evil thing—a thing to be got rid of at all costs. Thus we find him at the age of 29 forsaking "home" for "homelessness"—leaving behind wife and child, father, friends, wealth and ease—in the hope that, somewhere and somehow, he might find *Deli-*

Relation between Transmigration and Pessimism.

Pessimism drives Gotama away from home.

verance and bring suffering to an end. Years were spent by him in privations and tortures incredible while searching for a "Way of Escape;" but all in vain. Every suggested means he tested, and rejected as worthless. Thus, thrown back upon himself, he realised that he must be his own saviour, and unaided find the "Way to bring Rebirth to an end." He is represented as meditating:—

"Verily this world has fallen upon trouble, with its births, and ageing and dying, and re-births, and from this suffering no man knoweth the way of escape. O where shall a way out from this suffering, from decay and death, be made known?"

Gotama's problem and his solution.

This was his problem, and he believed that he solved it by profound meditation and self-conquest. He was convinced that he now understood the cause of suffering and how suffering could be brought to an end—that he had discovered the "Key" to the "Riddle of the Universe," and that "Key" was "the Law of Causality."

This preliminary study has given us the background, or, shall we say, the environment and atmosphere of the Buddha's Moral Teaching. We are now in a more favourable position for estimating its intrinsic worth, and its practical value for mankind as a code of life.

Let the reader bear in mind that Gotama Buddha had no belief in the "Supernatural." He assumed that all existing things, including gods and men, were under the control of a rigid natural law—the law of "Becoming and Passing Away." This law was his great discovery under the Bodhi tree. This was the

The Buddha had no belief in the Supernatural.

knowledge that made him the Buddha—the "Awakened One," the "Enlightened One." The Buddha is represented as stating this "Supreme Law of the Universe" in the following terse sentences :—

"I will teach you the Dhamma :—That being present, this becomes ; from the arising of that, this arises. That being absent, this does not become ; from the cessation of that, this ceases " (Majjhima N. Sutta 79). It was the discovery of this "natural, necessary, universal law, by which all things, bodily and mental, *happened*, or became nascent, static, and expiring," which enabled him to understand the origin of suffering and the means of ending it. The Buddha's Moral System has for its foundation this unchanging law of "Cause and Effect," which cannot be modified, nor interfered with by God or man. Each man must work out his own salvation without the aid of gods and priests, rituals and charms. He stands alone in the Universe, and alone he must travel the road that leads to "the cessation of pain." The Buddha himself can do no more than point out the way : he cannot lend a hand to help one over the rough and difficult stages of the journey. "Be ye yourselves your own refuge," said he "the Buddhas are only teachers."

The foundation of the Buddha's Moral System.

Each man stands alone in the Universe.

CHAPTER II.

The Buddha not a Saviour, but a Pathfinder and Guide.

The Buddha, therefore, stands before the world as a "Pioneer," a "Pathfinder," who has re-discovered *the Way that leads from Sorrow to Sorrowlessness.* He does not profess to have constructed the "Way," or even to have been the original discoverer of it. He plainly tells us that at various stages in the dim past of the world's history, other "Pathfinders" have appeared and pointed out *this same Way* to their contemporaries. Through the ignorance, the passions, and the blind folly of men, however, that "Path" had become overgrown and lost sight of. The Buddha, by his own unaided efforts, had discovered it again, and had followed it to its terminus, and had come to "the Goal of Existence" where all suffering ends. His mission now is to show that "Way" to others. His purpose is altogether a practical one. He preaches to all living beings, enveloped in sufferings, in the grip of an iron, unchanging law, a way of escape from that existence which is misery. He came not as a "Saviour" of men, but as a Guide to point out the "Way" by which they could save themselves. We may say, therefore, that the "Gospel of the Buddha" is a "Gospel of Escape," rather than a "Gospel of Deliverance."

The Buddha's Way of Escape for all living beings.

But though his great purpose was to show men the "Way to Nirvana," he realised that this goal was so far off, so difficult even to conceive of, that ordinary men could not be expected to desire it, much less comprehend it. Therefore,

This "Way" too difficult for ordinary men.

in his ordinary preaching to the common people, he says little about this higher doctrine, but begins with such simple lessons as: "Be kind to one another. Do not lie. Do not steal. Do your duty in every station of life." He said to them, "If you do good, you will be happy. If you do wrong, you will be miserable." As we have already pointed out, he had nothing new in morals to teach them, but he realised the need for common everyday righteousness, as, probably, none of his contemporaries did. It is true that he revealed the "Higher Doctrine" to his select disciples, i.e., that right-conduct is merely a preliminary stage upon that road which leads to the "Highest," nay that this common everyday morality is only a side road leading towards the entrance to "the Way" itself. Nevertheless he made it clear that no one could hope to enter that "Way" except by means of this road of common duty. The Buddha's insistence on "right-doing" (which included right-thinking) was a great improvement upon the common teaching in India at that period. Men usually sought happiness and prosperity through charms and sacrifices, by the aid of unscrupulous Brahmans. The Buddha declared all these means to be useless. "Happiness can only come through right conduct," said he.

The Buddha's insistence on right-doing and right-thinking.

Now it should be noted that whilst the Buddha taught simple morality—rules concerning everyday life and conduct—to the common people, he taught his *Doctrine* only to the select few whom he had gathered around him. It must not be inferred from this that he had both an "open" (exoteric) doctrine, and a "secret" (esoteric) doctrine,—such an inference would be utterly untrue, because, as he

himself emphatically declared, he held nothing in the "closed fist." His meditation under the Bodhi tree gives us the true explanation.

He says :—"I have penetrated this deep truth (the law of casuality), which is difficult to perceive, and difficult to understand.....*which only the wise can grasp.*"

His Dhamma was "a deep truth," an intricate and difficult philosophy, which they alone could understand whose mental faculties had been so sharpened and polished that they could penetrate into its deep mysteries. The Buddha expected to find very few men of this mental calibre, and his experience confirmed his expectation. Whilst, therefore, potentially, the Buddha's Dhamma offered a *Way of Escape* to all living creatures,—human and non-human—actually it could be received only by the intellectual few, the very cream of the human race. Those alone who had attained the highest point of development possible for living beings, (and who, in their multitudinous lives, had proved all forms of existence, from life as an insect to life as a god, to be unsatisfying) were in a position to understand and receive the Buddha's fundamental doctrine that "all existence is misery." The Buddha himself, in his first sermon at Benares, says that for the sake of the Dhamma, "the sons of noble families leave their homes and go into homelessness." As a matter of historical fact those early followers who gathered around the Buddha, and became his personal disciples, are usually described as "the sons of noble houses." Some of them belonged to

The Buddha's essential teaching comprehended only by the intellectual few.

The Buddha's early disciples Brahamans and nobles.

the royal Sakyas, others were young Brahmans or sons of merchant-princes. There were very few exceptions to this rule, and their high social position is assumed to have been due to the merit acquired in former lives. It is also implied that their education and intellectual attainments were in keeping with their social status. Such men as these, who had nothing more to hope from life, when the "cessation af becoming" was preached to them, accepted the doctrine gladly as a way of escape from an intolerable position. But this was no message of hope for the common people, and it had no meaning at all for the incalculable millions of sub-human living beings, who were toiling painfully up the steep path that leads to birth as a human being. A well-known Buddhist writer has dealt with this subject very clearly in the following passage :—

The inconceivable difficulty of attaining birth as a human being.

"Birth as a human being is inconceivably difficult to attain, and, when gained, it is only the cream of the select, of the most fortunate of men, that achieve the stupendous and hardly-won sight face to face, of Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.....The Dhamma is distinctly not for every one—in the sense that every one cannot, at once, reach up to its supremely altruistic and sublimer heights. Comparatively but a few, a very very few, of Sansara's teeming "beings," at any one time, have evolved high enough to appreciate and accept the Tri-Ratna. Are then the Buddhists of Ceylon, Burma, etc., thus highly evolved? It is difficult to say.....The Triple Gem is the shining crest of the elect only. Therefore the Tri-Ratna are truly and worthily named."

(Dr. Cassius A. Perera, "Buddhist Annual of Ceylon," 1920, page 7.)

We see, therefore, that the practice of common morality in daily life is not Buddhism, and that those that have no greater claim than this are not, in any true sense, Buddhists. "Right-behaviour" in the relationships of ordinary life is only a stepping-stone, or the lowest rung of the ladder which leads from "sorrow" to "sorrow-lessness." The Buddha himself described morality as a temporary make-shift raft which enables a man to cross safely a difficult stage of life's journey. When it had served its useful but temporary purpose, however, this common morality was to be abandoned and left behind, as men abandon a raft of twigs and brushwood when it has carried them safely to the other side of the river. That is to say, by refraining from evil and doing good amongst men, one is raised to a position more favourable for obtaining that perfect control of mind and emotion which is the very essence of the higher Buddhist morality.

Common morality only a temporary make-shift raft.

The learned Buddhist Priest, Bhikkhu Silacara, has described the "Heart of Buddhism" in the following terms:—

"Morality is the first means the climber towards the Buddhist goal of the "mind's deliverance" is asked to use in his efforts to mount towards that far height. 'Being good' is not an end in itself: this the Buddha insists on. Goodness is good only because it is "good for something," and in the Buddha-dhamma, that 'something' is the reaching of the deliverance of the mind. With all the recommendations to the observance of right

behaviour that are so frequently met with in the discourses of the Buddha, it is never for a moment lost sight of that *Sila* is only a stepping-stone to something beyond, a stepping-stone that is followed by many others, leading in long file towards the one end always kept in view, *the mind's deliverance.* Virtue, indeed, yields happiness, well-being, but it does more: it yields so much progress towards the final goal. It is towards this goal that the Buddhist is always moving in all that he does in obedience to his Teacher's behest." (Buddhist Annual of Ceylon, 1920, page 15.)

The heart of Buddhism.

CHAPTER III.

The Two Planes of Morality in Buddhism.

By this time every reader will have perceived that there are two planes of morality in Buddhism —a lower and a higher plane, i.e., there is the every-day morality of the common people, which is merely preparatory, and contains no specific Buddhist teaching at all; and there is the higher morality for the elect few who have resolved to attain Nirvana. We will now devote our whole attention to this *higher* morality which is essentially and peculiarly Buddhistic.

Buddhism claims to be a religion of pure reason. Its antitheses are not "Sin" and "Holiness" but "Ignorance" and "Knowledge." It is natural, therefore, that the indispensable condition of entrance into this Higher Stage of morality is "Knowledge"; not knowledge in general, but insight into and understanding of the Buddha's profound "Law of Casuality"—the law that "everything that has arisen, has done so in dependence upon some immediately pre-existing condition, and that with the removal of that condition, the thing arising in dependence upon it ceases to be." (Bhikkhu Silacara, "The Noble Eightfold Path," pages 3 and 4.)

Real insight into the Buddha's "Law of Casuality" essential to salvation.

The whole Buddhist system is built upon this law, and to the student who fails to comprehend it the "Higher Morality" of Buddhism will be unintelligible. Therefore, whilst avoiding the use

of technical terms as far as possible, we would endeavour to set forth the fundamental principles of the Buddha's Philosophy in the simplest form consistent with truth and justice.

Sorrow: the foundation truth of the Buddha's system.

The Buddha began his teaching with the great fact of "Universal Sorrow." All living beings—animals, demons, men, and gods,—are involved in this sorrow which openly manifests itself in Birth, Disease, Old-age, Death, Re-birth.

But if one should ask: "Why does sorrow, pain, misery reign supreme in the Universe?" the Buddha replies: "Because there is no permanence: everything is transitory; there is no 'being,' only 'becoming.' Change and sorrow are mere cause and effect." From one point of view "sorrow" is "ignorance," from another "sorrow" is "transciency." But the very heart of sorrow for the individual man is belief in his own individuality, his "Ego," his soul, because this belief leads him to cling to this life and to crave for future lives. This "will to live" is not only the concentrated essence of sorrow itself, but it is also that force which binds him to the "wheel of life" and causes rebirth. Bhikkhu Silacara may well say that "Morality in the ultimate analysis is a recognition, expressed in deeds, of the fact that separate individual existence is nothing but a delusion." ("Noble Eight-fold Path," page 40.) Whilst another Buddhist writer says: "The knowledge of the 'I' as 'Not-I,' the *anatta* idea, is therefore the great, the only knowledge—the

The heart of sorrow is man's belief in his own *ego*.

Knowledge that the "I" is "Not-I" is the essential knowledge.

knowledge *par-excellence*, the Buddha-knowledge, because at one stroke it abolishes both sorrow and life." (Paul Dahlke, "Buddhist Essays.")

We will try to simplify this even further.

In the *Anguttara N. iii*, 134, we read as follows:—

"Whether Buddhas arise, O priests, or whether Buddhas do not arise, it remains a fact, and the fixed and necessary constitution of being, that (1) all its constituents are transitory, (2) all its constituents are misery, (3) all its constituents are lacking in an Ego." (See Warren, "Buddhism in Translations," p. XIV.)

Therefore, while it is true that the Buddha built up his philosophy on the foundation truth of "Universal Sorrow," he believed that sorrow itself was due to the fact that all things in this world, and in every known and conceivable world, are transitory and impermanent. This doctrine applies equally to living beings and to inanimate things.

Sorrow the consequence of impermanence.

There is nothing that corresponds to our idea of "Substance" ("no underlying persistent reality," as Warren phrases it) in material things, and in living beings, including man. There is no permanent element, physical or spiritual, that will survive the death of the body.

Now seeing that all life is sorrow, whether life in this world of men, or in the world of demons, or in the heavens of the gods, the vital question for the Buddhist is, *How to get rid of existence and to bring rebirth to an end.* Let us call to mind the Buddha's great law of cause and effect that everything that has arisen has done so in dependence upon some immediately pre-existing con-

The Buddhist's problem.

dition, and that with the removal of that condition the thing arising in dependence upon it ceases to be. Now it is clear that the pre-existing condition of sorrow is birth, because if a man had not been born he could not have suffered. It follows, therefore, that if the immediate condition of birth can be removed, Re-birth will be impossible—it will come to an end. But the pre-existing condition upon which birth depends is Karma. How shall then Karma be brought to an end? Karma is the consequence that follows action; therefore, when action ceases, it ceases. But action —*deed*—can only cease when the pre-existing cause of deed is cut off, namely "Desire," an attachment to objects—especially the Clinging to Existence. But why do men cling to existence which is sorrow and pain? Through "Ignorance." The Buddha teaches that both gods and men, until "enlightened," believe firmly that they are quite separate, both from the world in which they live and from the people and other beings who inhabit it. They believe that they possess a soul or self that must remain individual and distinct for ever. Men cling to this existence and delight in it: the thought of "non-existence" is intolerable to them. Rhys Davids says: "It is a belief common to all schools of Buddhists that the origin of sorrow is identical with the origin of individuality. Sorrow is in fact the result of the effort which an individual has to make to keep separate from the rest of existence.....It is ignorance which leads them to think 'This is I' or 'This is mine,' just as a bubble or cell might think itself an independent

Karma the cause of re-birth.

The essence of "ignorance" is belief in a separate soul or self.

being. The effort to keep oneself separate may succeed for a time, but so long as it is successful it involves limitation, and therefore ignorance, and therefore pain." We see, therefore, that this belief in "individual existence" is the result of "Ignorance." The Buddha assures us that it is useless to attempt to discover the pre-existing condition (the efficient cause) of ignorance. For all practical purposes Ignorance is the final cause from which spring all those evil conditions which ultimately produce Re-birth. If, then, Ignorance can be brought to an end, existence will be "cut off at the root like a palm-tree which can never sprout again." But "Ignorance" can only be cut off by "Enlightenment"—Knowledge. When this true enlightenment comes, the man sees clearly that the Individuality that he clung to was an illusion and does not really exist. He now says: This "I" which I considered as something distinct, individual, and separate from all else in the universe, can in no sense be differentiated from the rest of the world: this "I" is only a "Seeming-I," i.e., really a "Not-I." Ignorance is dispelled, and I now see things as they really are, and, seeing things as they really are, I perceive that everything, including my body and mind (Nama-rupa), is evil, and that there is nothing in the whole universe worthy to be desired. I, therefore, cease to desire anything. The "Will to Live" is dead too—I no longer cling to my individual existence but am willing to cease to be. I am now indifferent to all things—the world and life have lost their attraction. I still live, but I live as

"Ignorance" is the "final cause" of existence and sorrow.

How "Ignorance" can be destroyed.

though I did not live. All my actions now are performed without desire, and they produce no "Fruitful Karma." When this life comes to an end it will be the end of all: there will be no "Rebirth." I shall have attained Pari-Nirvana—the Goal of Sorrowlessness.

CHAPTER IV.

Gotama Buddha's Disbelief in the Supernatural, and Some of its Consequences.

We have already reminded the reader that this great teacher did not believe in the Supernatural, i.e., in God. And as there was no divine Ruler of men to issue commands, and to demand obedience, there could be no such things as "absolute right or wrong" in the Buddha's system, and, of course, no idea of *Sin*. Sin has no place in Buddhism. There is no being against whom man can sin—he is his own master, arbiter of his own destiny. He owns allegiance to no one,—there is no one whom he need obey. He is responsible to himself alone, and upon his own head will fall the consequences of his own deeds. Hence it is *impossible* for him to sin, unless we say that he sins against himself, and that is a misuse of language. He cannot even injure another in any permanent way because the natural law of Karma is so just that it protects all beings from injury, whether from inanimate nature, or from other living beings. A man may think that he is injuring another, but that is an illusion—he is really injuring himself. The harm that he tries to do to the other will rebound upon himself leaving his supposed victim unscathed. Any temporary inconvenience he may have suffered will be readjusted by the law of

The idea of "sin" not found in Buddhism.

Karma. Therefore, the Buddha does not divide mankind into "Sinners" and "Saints," but into "Fools" and "Wise men." The man who guards his thoughts and his deeds is a wise man and a lover of himself; whilst his opposite is a fool and a hater of himself. So we see that, from the Buddha's standpoint, no action or course of conduct is *intrinsically* right or wrong, i.e., right or wrong independently of all consequences. Such a view would have appeared absurd to the Buddha. In his view, morality is solely a means to the end:—(1) in the lower sphere a means to the end of a happy life on earth and in the heavens, (2) but in the higher sphere a means to complete deliverance from Re-birth, i.e., from existence.

The Buddha divides mankind into "Fools" and "Wise men," not into "Saints" and "Sinners."

The Buddha holds that nothing is intrinsically right or wrong.

As a profound student of Buddhism has said: "Thus we see that the decided advantage of moral action over unmoral arises wholly and solely from the consequences to the actor himself, which is naturally, and necessarily attached to the one course of action or the other."—(Oldenburg's *Buddha*, p. 289.)

"He who speaks and acts with impure thoughts, him sorrow follows, as the wheel follows the foot of the draught horse. He who speaks and acts with pure thoughts, him joy follows like his shadow which does not leave him."—(*Dhammapada*, 1 and 2.)

Briefly stated: "Right is right simply because it leads to happiness; Wrong is wrong solely because it entails suffering." This explains why Buddhism regards many things that are in them-

selves beautiful and good as the greatest evils; such things, for example, as the love of husbands and wives, parents and children, because this love makes men cling to the household life and to desire continued existence. The greatest evils, in the eyes of the Buddha, were those things which led men to cling most tenaciously to life, for "Existence is the greatest evil." Whatever hindered a man's progress on the way to release—no matter how good in itself—was an evil, and must be abandoned.

That which causes men to cling most tenaciously to life is the greatest evil.

It has been said that the Buddha taught that that action is right which brings happiness to oneself and others; and there is much support for this view in his practical teaching. The happy consequences to others from our actions are, however, purely accidental—a mere by-product; for it is clear that, ultimately, each man must decide which course of action will be most advantageous to himself, without regard to others If others benefit, well and good, but consideration for others must not be allowed to stand in the way of one's own progress towards Nirvana. Each man's salvation depends upon himself alone, and he must never lose sight of self or he will slip backwards on the "Way" instead of advancing. In fact, as we have already pointed out, none can really help or hinder another. Every man must bear his own burden—no one can relieve him of any part of the load—and he must pursue his solitary way along the great and difficult road, *Sansara*. This self-centredness is very clearly seen in Gotama's own life and conduct. When he

The essential egotism of Buddhism.

The self-centredness of Gotama's own life and conduct.

forsook home he thought of no one but himself. He was so absorbed in his own misery that he had no thought for the sorrow of wife, and child, and aged father—at least any such consideration was swamped in the thought of self. We are not condemning him but simply stating a fact. There are higher claims in life than the claims of kinship and blood: for example, the claims of religion, and claims of one's country in great national crises.

A Buddhist writer has stated this with great frankness. Speaking of the Buddha's "Great Renunciation" he says:—

"Nothing lies further from his mind than the welfare of others. He seeks his own salvation and that only. It is a purely egotistical impulse, but what more natural than that one, who suddenly finds himself in a burning house, should seek first of all to save himself? After he has reached the blest apprehension: 'I am saved,' his mind turns back to his suffering fellowmen; and only now, in the retrospective motion, do we see love emerge in the shape of the compassion of comprehension." (Paul Dahlke, "Buddhist Essays," pp. 131-2.) The oldest tradition also represents the Buddha's determination to preach the doctrine to others as an afterthought. After he has obtained "Supreme Wisdom," he sits quietly enjoying the peace and calm which has followed the tempest and the struggle. Whilst he sits there he meditates, but I will let the text speak for itself:—"Into the mind of the Exalted One, while he tarried retired in solitude, came this thought: I have penetrated this deep truth (the law of causality), which is difficult to perceive, and difficult to understand, peace-giving, sublime,

The Buddha's resolve not to preach his doctrine to others.

which transcends all thought, is deeply significant, which only the wise can grasp ... . Should I now preach the Doctrine and mankind not understand me, it would bring me nothing but trouble. And there passed unceasingly through the mind of the Exalted One this voice which no one had ever before heard :—

> ' Why reveal to the world what I have won by severe struggle?
> ' The truth remains hidden from him whom desire and hate absorb;
> 'It is difficult, mysterious, deep, hidden from the coarse mind;
> ' He cannot apprehend it, whose mind earthly vocations surround with night.'

"When the Exalted One thought thus, his heart was inclined to abide in quietude and not to proclaim the Doctrine. Then Brahma Sahampati with his thought perceived the thought of the Holy One, and said to himself : ' Truly the world is lost, truly the world is undone, if the heart of the Perfect One, the holy, highest Buddha, be bent on abiding in quietude and not preaching the Doctrine.' Then Brahma Sahampati left the heaven of Brahma, appeared before the Exalted One, made bare one of his shoulders, bowed his right knee to the earth, raised his folded hands to the Exalted One, and spake to the Exalted One thus :—

Brahma intercedes with the Buddha for mankind.

' May it please, O Sire, the Exalted One, to preach the Doctrine. May it please the Perfect One to preach the Doctrine. There are beings, who are pure from the dust of the earthly, but if they hear not the preaching of the Doctrine, they are lost; they will be believers of the Doctrine.'

(The Buddha sets the solicitation of Brahma against the doubts and apprehensions, which made the preaching of the truth appear to him to be a fruitless undertaking. Brahma repeats his request three times: at last the Buddha grants it.)

" When the Exalted One surveyed the Universe with the glance of a Buddha, he saw beings whose souls were pure and whose souls were not pure from the dust of the earthy, with sharp faculties, and with dull faculties, noble natures and ignoble natures, good hearers and wicked hearers, many who lived in fear of the world to come and of sin. When he saw this he spake to Brahma Sahampati in these words :—

The Buddha grants Brahma's prayer.

' Let open be the door of eternity: He who hath ears, let him hear the word and believe. I thought of affliction for myself, therefore have I, O Brahma, not yet proclaimed the Noble Word to the world.'

" Then Brahma Sahampati perceived: ' The Exalted One has answered my prayer, he will preach the Doctrine.' Then he bowed before the Exalted One, walked round him respectfully, and vanished." (*Mahavagga* I. 5. Oldenberg's *Buddha*, pp. 120, 121.)

This long quotation was necessary, because it deals with a matter of the most vital importance to Buddhism, and it was only right that it should be stated in the very words of the Buddhist Canon. We see now that not only in the " Great Renunciation," but also in the " Great Deliverance," the Buddha was thinking only of himself. His own welfare absorbed his mind to the exclusion of all else. That the Doctrine was preached to mankind was due not to the Buddha's initiative, but to the

compassionate pleading of Brahma. On this subject Paul Dahlke writes very plainly. He says:—

"In Buddhism it has always been the greatest gift of love to point out the true path; a gift assuring the bestower thereof the richest reward. 'Far above the greatest gift stands the reward of those who take only a verse of four lines of this doctrine, and explaining it make it clear to others in all its purity, says a passage in a Sutra of the *Mahayana*. Here it must be noticed that this greatest gift of love is not bestowed in the interest of the receiver thereof; *the giver bestows it in his own interest*. That the receiver at the same time becomes the possessor of an infinite treasure is only a secondary consideration. This is the—to our eyes—degenerate shape which love assumes in this system; nothing is left but the bony skeleton of Action. That cordiality which forgets itself for others, that affection which breeds tenderness and emotion, is entirely wanting here. The whole moral scheme in Buddhism is nothing but a sum in arithmetic, set down by a clear cold egoism; as much as I give to others, as much will come again to me. Kamma is the most exact arithmetician in the world." ("Buddhist Essays," pp. 131, 132.)

A modern Buddhist's comment.

Thus we see that the ancient Buddhist texts, and the modern Buddhist commentator, agree in this, that morality in Buddhism is pure egotism. Here is no room for love, self-sacrifice, mercy, forgiveness, but only for law, and a strict and ruthless justice.

CHAPTER V.

The Buddha's Doctrine of Renunciation.

The Buddha was not exaggerating when he called his Doctrine a "deep truth, which only the wise can grasp," and we can well understand that "only the cream of the select, the most fortunate of men" can hope to understand it, and fewer still to realise it by personal experience; for who would be so foolish as to suppose that anyone by a mere intellectual apprehension of this theory of the ideal life could hope to reach Nirvana? Knowledge is vitally necessary as a means to the end, but it is not the end itself; that end is "Perfect Wisdom."

The ideal life not only to be understood but lived.

That which is known theoretically must be experienced, the ideal life must not only be understood but *lived*, for in no other way can knowledge be turned into wisdom. The higher morality of Buddhism is the practical means by which this great end is to be attained, and we will now deal with the essential points of the system.

First of all, let it be clearly understood that this higher morality of Buddhism cannot be practised by a man so long as he is involved in family and social life. The primary condition is that he renounce the world, and all that is implied in the term. He need not become a monk for, theoretically, the highest saintship—Arahatship—is possible to a layman, and it is actually recorded that in the early days

Renunciation the first condition of Saintship.

of Buddhism, certain laymen did attain to Arahatship. How difficult the attainment was, however, is seen from the fact that, on the very day a man attained to Arahatship, he must either be received into the Order, or die. As we read in the Milinda Prasna (264. 29, 265. 32)—

(King Milinda speaking:—)

"Venerable Nagasena, your people say: Whosoever has attained, as a layman, to Arahatship, one of two conditions is possible to him and no other,—either that very day he enters the Order, or he dies away, for beyond that day he cannot last. Then, Nagasena, by whatever means attained, the holy condition of Arahatship is thereby also lost, for destruction of life is involved in it."

(Nagasena replying:—)

"It is the condition of laymanship which is at fault, O King. In that faulty condition, and by reason of the weakness of the condition itself, the layman who, as such, has attained to Arahatship must either, that very day, enter the Order, or die away. That is not the fault of Arahatship, O King. It is laymanship that is at fault through not being strong enough." (S. B. E., Rhys Davids).

Nagasena explains "Arahatship."

What we are trying to make clear is that, the very first step in the "higher life" of Buddhism is Renunciation, and renunciation of the most absolute kind. The man who decides to attain Nirvana, whether he becomes a monk or not, must be a mendicant, because he can neither possess property nor earn his own living. Almost invariably he does enter the Order of monks, but this is optional. The essential step is *a complete severance*

Secular life must be abandoned.

of self from the world. Every dear tie must be broken; he must free himself from all the entanglements of friendship and family love. The atmosphere of the home will not even sustain the spiritual life of the Buddhist saint, much less promote that vigorous growth in mind-control, which is so essential to him. As the ancient text says:

> "With fetters bound is household life, a state of impurity,
> But the freedom of the open sky is the life of the ascetic."

A merely outward and visible renunciation is useless. Desire for and attachment to all those worldly things and beloved persons he had regarded as his most precious possessions must be torn from the heart and purged from the mind. To live separate in body, while the mind wanders back to its old haunts, and dwells among past joys, is useless.

Attachment to loved ones must be renounced.

> "Without a backward glance shall he go forth:
> The bonds of love
> Off-shaking, like an elephant set free."

To forsake home and loved ones is a sore and grievous task for a good and humane man. But to banish from the heart all those sentiments of love and friendship for the dear ones left behind is more grievous and costly still. Nevertheless it must be done in the interests of the man's own highest development. As a Buddhist writer says: "From this view of things there results a confining of oneself to oneself, a withdrawal which sets its specific mark upon all our intercourse with our former relations and neighbours: active love, spontaneous sorrow for one's nearest dies away, 'Whoso bears love to nothing, sorrows over nothing.'" (Paul Dahlke, "Buddhist Essays," p. 135).

"Detachment" illustrated by the story of a young monk.

This is well illustrated by the story of a young monk in the *Visuddhi-Magga*, (chap.iii.): "For some persons even mother and father are no hindrances, as in the case of the young priest, the nephew on his mother's side of an elder who dwelt in Korandaka Monastery."

It is related that the young priest had gone to Rohana to hear the precepts read, and the elder's sister, who was a lay devotee, used constantly to ask the elder for news of her son. One day the elder determined to go and fetch the lad, and set out in the direction of Rohana. The youth also had left his quarters and had issued forth from Rohana. For he said to himself: "It is a long time that I have lived here. I will go now and see my preceptor, and, having learnt how the laywoman (his mother) is doing, I will return again." When they met, his preceptor asked him, "Whither are you going?" He told him. Then the elder said: "You do well; the laywoman is always asking of you, and it is for this very reason that I am come. By all means go; and I will stay to keep residence here." And thus he dismissed him. The young priest came to the Korandaka monastery near his home. His father hearing that a strange monk had come, drew near without recognising him and, having done obeisance to him, said: "For the next three months you must beg your food at our home." The young priest assented by his silence. At breakfast time the lad came to the house of his mother and father, but none recognised him. And he remained three months and always ate his alms at their house. And when residence was over, he announced to them that he was about to depart.

When the elder returned to the village of Korandaka, the laywoman, who was always looking up the road and saying: "Now my brother is coming with my son," saw him approaching alone, fell at his feet, and wept, and lamented, saying: "My son, methinks, must be dead, inasmuch as the elder comes alone."

When the elder had revealed the fact that the young monk whom she and her husband had entertained was indeed their son, she exclaimed: "This man ate for three months in the house of the mother who bore him, and never said, 'I am thy son, and thou art my mother.' O the wonderful man!"

"For such a one mother and father are no hindrances, much less any other lay devotee." (For the full translation of this story, see Warren, "Buddhism in Translations," pp. 434—436).

CHAPTER VI.

How to Attain that Equanimity which is Perfect Wisdom.

The "higher morality" of Buddhism, therefore, demands that a man, *in his own interests*, should isolate himself not only from bodily contact and association with his family and friends, but even from personal interest in their welfare—in their joys and sorrows. This is a hard doctrine but if it is not accepted and practised further progress is impossible. The candidate for Buddhist sainthood must cultivate his faculties until he obtains that "equanimity of mind" which cannot be disturbed by joy or sorrow, love or hate, or any other emotion, good or evil; for "emotion is ignorance," and must be got rid of. That ideal state of mind is described in an old text in the following terms:—

"Equanimity of mind" essential.

"Those who cause me pain, and those who cause me joy, to all I am alike; affection and hatred I know not. In joy and sorrow I remain unmoved; in honour and in dishonour throughout I am alike. That is the perfection of my equanimity." (*Cariya Pitaka iii.* 15, Oldenberg).

How is this state of equanimity—this indifference to joy or sorrow, love or hate—to be attained? Not, as we have already explained, by any merely outward act of renunciation, but by constantly maintaining a mental attitude which is appropriately called an attitude of awareness, and

The mental attitude of "awareness."

by meditation. The following passages from the *Digha N.*, Sutta 22, throws a clear light on this subject:—

"And the Blessed One addressed the priests:

"Priests, there is but one way open to mortals for the attainment of purity, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the abolition of misery and grief, for the acquisition of the correct rule of conduct, for the realization of Nirvana, and that is *the Four Intent Contemplations*.

The "Four Intent Contemplations" explained.

"And what are the four?

"Whenever, O priests, a priest lives, as respects the body, observant of the body, strenuous, conscious, contemplative, and has rid himself of lust and grief; as respects sensations, observant of sensations, strenuous, conscious, contemplative; as respects the mind, observant of the mind, strenuous, conscious, contemplative; as respects the elements of being, observant of the elements of being, strenuous, conscious, contemplative, and has rid himself of lust and grief."

Here we see that the chief subject of meditation or contemplation is man—the body, the sensations, the mind, and the five groups of the elements of being. There are many others—in fact in the *Visuddhi-Magga* (chap. iii.) we are told that there are forty subjects of meditation—but these four are the essential ones. The sole object of these meditations is to enable a man (1) to free himself from lust and grief, (2) to realize for himself that there is in him no soul or self,—nothing that is worth calling "I" or "mine," (3) to attain that supreme wisdom (mind-control) which is Nirvana. But now let us consider what is

meant by the mental attitude of awareness. It means that the monk does everything with deliberate intention, and that he is continually *aware* of what he is doing and of why he is doing it. One of the best means of acquiring this power of concentration is the regular practice of deep breathing. "A priest retiring to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an uninhabited spot, sits him down cross-legged with body erect and contemplative faculty intent, and contemplates his expirations, and contemplates his inspirations, and in making a long expiration thoroughly comprehends the long expiration he is making and in making a short expiration thoroughly comprehends, etc." Here we see the attitude of "awareness," the ever present vivid consciousness of self and of what one is doing down to the smallest detail of life. To illustrate this I will quote again:

The term "awareness" explained.

"But again, O priests, a priest, in eating, drinking, chewing, and tasting has an accurate comprehension of what he does; in walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, talking, and being silent has an accurate comprehension of what he does. But again, O priests, a priest considers this body upwards from the soles of the feet, and downwards from the crown of the head, enclosed by skin, and full of all manner of uncleanness, saying, 'There is in this body hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinew, bone, marrow of the bones, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, lymph, saliva, snot, synovial fluid, urine.' Thus he lives, either in his own person, or in other

The dissected body and its lessons.

persons, as respects the body observant of the body, either observant of origination in the body, or observant of destruction in the body, or observant of both origination and destruction in the body; and the recognition of the body, by his intent contemplation, is merely to the extent of this knowledge, merely to the extent of this contemplation, and he lives unattached, nor clings to anything in the world. Thus, O priests, does a priest live, as respects the body, observant of the body.

" But again, O priests, a priest takes this body, whatever it may be doing, or however it may be situated, and considers it according to the elements of which it is composed, saying: 'There are in this body the elements earth, water, fire, and wind.' Just as a butcher who has a cow, so long as it is alive, never ceases to think of it as a cow, but after he has killed it, and divided it up, thinks of it no longer as a cow, but as meat. In exactly the same way, while a man is an ignorant, unconverted person, whether he be a householder, or a member of the Order, he never ceases to think of himself as a living entity or individual, until such time as he takes this body, whatever it may be doing, or however it may be situated, and analysing it considers it according to the elements of which it is composed. But when he has considered it according to the elements of which it is composed, he ceases to think of it as a living entity or individual, and thinks of it only as so many elements.

Consideration of the elements of the body renders belief in personal identity impossible.

" But again, O priests, a priest, if perchance he sees in a cemetery a decaying body one day dead,

or two days dead, or three days dead, swollen, black, and full of festering putridity, he compares his own body, saying: 'Verily, my body also has this nature, this destiny, and is not exempt.'

The value of meditation among the tombs.

"Thus he lives, either in his own person (etc. as before.)"

Then are described a series of bodies in various stages of decomposition from a body being eaten by crows and jackals to a skeleton and the scattered bones of a skeleton, and the bones of a skeleton just crumbling to dust. Concerning all these bodies he said: "Verily my body also has this nature, this destiny, and is not exempt.

"Thus he lives, either in his own person (etc as before)."

In the same minute way the man observes his sensations, his mind, the elements of being in the five attachment groups, the organs of sense, etc. (See Warren, "Buddhism in Translations," pp. 353–362.)

And what is the object of all these contemplations? Are they intended merely to disgust one? Well, they are intended to create a feeling of disgust for the body and the mind, and for all that we call "ourself" or "mine"; but this feeling of disgust is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end—to the definite end of revealing to the man that the Three Characteristics—(1) "impermanence," (2) "misery," and (3) "the lack of an 'Ego,'" inhere in man, as in all else in the universe. He ceases to think of himself as a *man*, a *living entity* or *individual*, but in future thinks of himself as only so many elements. This

These benefits summarized.

is explained very clearly in an ancient comment on the passage we quoted from, "The Contemplation of Breathing": "He who makes use of his respirations first investigates form saying: 'On what are these expirations and inspirations based? They are based on matter, and matter is the material body, and the material body is the four elements and form derivative from them.' Secondly: Name rests on the same (four elements) with the addition of contact. When he has thus grasped Name, he searches for its dependence, and perceives ignorance and the rest of Dependent Origination, and thinking: Name-and-form are merely dependence or else spring from dependence, there is nothing else to form the living entity or 'Ego,' he leaves all doubt behind, and strengthening his insight by the application of the Three Characteristics to dependent name-and-form, by degrees attains to saintship. This is how this priest sets out on his way towards saintship." (Warren, "Buddhism in Translations," Note on p. 355.)

Beauty is only skin-deep.

The Buddha instructed his followers always to see things as they really are—to look everything boldly in the face, not to be deceived by its outward appearance, but to analyse it into its elements. He who does this will see that beauty is only skin-deep; that a lovely woman, for example, is merely a bag of bones, and other disgusting things, tricked out to deceive the unwary into believing her beautiful and desirable. What men call "a beautiful thing" is only beautiful when regarded as a whole—it will not bear close examination and analysis, for when it is analysed into its component parts, it is seen to be made up of elements which are impermanent, evil, and

unsubstantial. This is true of everything in the world, both animate and inanimate. Thus we read in the *Visuddhi-Magga* (chap. xxi.):

> "Behold how empty is the world,
> Mogharaja! In thoughtfulness
> Let one remove belief in self,
> And pass beyond the realm of death.
> The King of Death can never find
> The man who thus the world beholds."

"When, in the course of his application of the Three Characteristics, the ascetic has thus considered the constituents of being in the light of their emptiness, he abandons all fear and joy in regard to them, and becomes indifferent and neutral, and does not deem them as 'I' or 'mine,' like a man who has given up his wife."

To the "enlightened" man the world and life are transient, vain, miserable, and unreal.

Again: "He who considers them (the constituents of being) in the light of their transitoriness, abounds in faith and obtains the unconditional deliverance; he who considers them in the light of their misery abounds in tranquillity and obtains the desireless deliverance; he who considers them in the light of their want of an Ego abounds in knowledge and obtains the empty deliverance." (Warren, "Buddhism in Translations," pp. 376–379).

We must guard ourselves against falling into the error that this "awareness" is mere knowledge of the action, or state of inaction, at any given moment. The *essential* knowledge is the knowledge that it is no living entity that acts or refrains from action, for "it is true that dogs,

How the Arahat's knowledge differs from that of animals and common men.

jackals, and other animals, when they walk, have knowledge of their walking." However, it is not with respect to knowledge of that kind that this is spoken. For such knowledge as that does not abandon the assumption of *a living entity* and does not show up that belief; nor is any subject of meditation present, nor any intent contemplation. But the knowledge of this priest abandons the assumption of a living entity and shows up that belief; and a subject of meditation is present, and intent contemplation. For this was spoken in respect to complete knowledge, comprising such points as "Who is it that walks?" The answer is that it is no living entity or Ego that walks. Whose walking is it? The answer is that it is not the walking of any living entity or Ego. What makes it walk? The answer is that the walking takes place through the action of the mind and permeation by the windy element. In a word the priest is aware that there is no living entity or Ego present to act or to cause action, but only the elements of being.

Enough has been quoted to shew that the supreme purpose of these meditations and other mental exercises is to lead the man to renounce the belief that he is, or has *a living entity* or *individuality*, a soul or self or Ego. Those who wish to pursue the subject further are referred to the ancient books themselves, either in the originals or in translations, and to Warren's "Buddhism in Translations," where selections from a wide range of Buddhist literature will be found.

The Jhanas.

These meditations are supplemented by the Jhanas, or self-induced hypnotic trances. These the Buddha himself habitually practised, and by means of them he attained Nirvana under the Bodhi tree.

They are not absolutely essential to the attainment of Nirvana, but the Buddha described them as very helpful, and strongly recommended them to his followers. We have not space for an exhaustive discussion of the Jhanas, nor is such a discussion necessary here. Nevertheless the following excellent summary of the four highest Jhanas, by a learned Buddhist priest, may interest the reader, and will throw further light upon this higher plane of Buddhist morality:—

The Jhanas described.

(1) "In the first of this set of specially refined states of consciousness, all idea of the existence of objects in a state of separation is lost, all discrimination between a *this* and a *that* is done away; and there remains only a consciousness of an infinitude of space.

(2) "In the next more refined state the idea of infinite space is transcended, and its place is taken by the idea of an infinitude of consciousness.

(3) "In the next higher state, the ideas of anything at all, of any kind of infinitude, whether of space or of consciousness, falls away, and the only idea present is that of nothingness.

(4) "And in the last of these four higher, more sublimated Jhanas, all idea whatsoever ceases, whether of something or nothing. There is here neither perceiving nor yet not perceiving of aught; all predication or possibility of predication has come to utter end." (Bhikkhu Silacara, "The Noble Eightfold Path," pp. 164–5.)

These trances enable a man to escape from the world and from himself into the realms of infinity and nothingness for longer or shorter periods of time, and, it is supposed, make it possible for him to realize for himself, not only that in him is

nothing real or permanent, but that throughout the whole universe there is no "being," no "reality," but only "becoming" and "transitoriness." In the trances he reaches the realm where form has ceased, consciousness has ceased, and even space has ceased. He passes into the realm of *nothingness*, and beyond that into the realm where nothingness has ceased, i.e., into absolute negation. Thus the devotee enjoys for a time the experience of a state of freedom from sorrow (oblivion) such as Pari-Nirvana is supposed to be. This experience helps him to believe that such a state of Pari-Nirvana exists.

The worth of the Jhanas estimated.

CHAPTER VII.

Love, Pity, and Sympathy in Buddhism.

Another method recommended by the Buddha as useful for obtaining that complete control of the mind which is essential to the highest development of the Buddhist is mental cultivation of the sentiments of universal love, pity, and sympathy. The devotee sits down cross-legged with body erect, and contemplative faculty intent, and begins by letting his love and pity flow out to the human beings and other living things that happen to be in his immediate vicinity. Then he gradually enlarges the circle until the whole sentient universe is suffused by that love and pity. It must be understood that this is purely a mental exercise unmixed with emotion or desire. And, of course, such exercises can have no practical influence upon those beings who are the objects of them. None the less the Buddhist Canon plainly teaches that these exercises are very rich in good results for the one who practises them. In the *Majjhima Nikaya*, the Buddha is reported to have given the following advice to Râhula, his son:—"Râhula, practise the mental development of universal love, and it will dispel whatever ill-will is in thee; practise the mental development of universal pity, and it will dispel whatever weariness is in thee; practise the mental development of universal sympathy, and it will dispel whatever dissatisfaction is in thee; practise the mental development of universal neutrality, and it will dispel whatever displeasure is in thee."

The Buddha's advice to his son Râhula.

The results of cultivating Universal Love are thus given by the Buddha in the *Anguttara Nikaya*:—

"Bhikkus! He who develops universal love by practising it over and over will be happy with the eleven good results that it produces. What are the eleven? They are: (1) He sleeps well, (2) wakes well, (3) is not troubled by frightful dreams, (4) becomes agreeable to human beings, (5) becomes agreeable to non-human beings, (6) is protected by devas, (7) is not hurt by fire, poison, or weapons; (8) his thoughts are easily and readily concentrated, (9) his countenance becomes inviting, (10) he will be conscious in his dying moment, and (11) if he be one who did not enter into the four paths of Tranquillity, he will be born in an abode of the "Noble Ones." (J. Wetthasinha, "Buddhist Annual," 1920, p. 24.)

The benefits of mental cultivation of Universal Love.

But, surely, to describe these sentiments as sentiments of love, and sympathy, and pity, is misleading. They can best be defined as sentiments of neutrality and harmlessness to all living beings. As Oldenberg says:—"It is not the emotion of a world-embracing-love, but this peaceful feeling of friendly harmony, which gives its stamp to the common life of Buddha's disciples." ("Buddha," p. 298.)

Love, in Buddhism, has been described in the following terms: "Clear, shining, but cold and colourless as the sun on a winter morning, this love rises before us." This is that "mental development of love" of which we have been hearing—love that is clear and cold, and colourless. But such a description is the very negation of love.

A Buddhist's definition of love.

Love must pour itself forth in blessing, in service, in sacrifice. Moreover, love must have a definite object upon which to expend itself. Love, far from being cold and colourless, glows with emotion, and is shot through with beautiful colours. Love is never a vague sentiment of the mind diffusing itself through the universe, it is always of individuals. This is true of a large family: the parents' love is not of the family as a whole, but of each individual child in it, and the principle holds good of any other concrete example that can be chosen. "A love that is merely a love of things in general or of the universe in its totality, apart from concern for individuals and apart from any desire for a love that shall be returned, is something quite different from any love that we know, and to call it by the name of love would be an abuse of language. If we conceive the unity of the world, not in the materialist terms of substance, but in the spiritual terms of love, then that unity will not be the unity of the absolutist philosophy in which all distinctions are at last merged, but it will be the unity rather of a family, of a comradeship where all the different members, with their characteristics unimpaired, are united by a common origin, or a common purpose, or a common affection."

Love more fully defined.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Buddha Forbids Revenge.

The Buddhist is also taught not to avenge himself on his enemy. The classic passage is in the *Dhammapada*: "For enmity never comes to an end through enmity here below; it comes to an end by non-enmity: this has been the rule from all eternity." The Buddha illustrates this teaching from the history of King Long-grief, whom his powerful neighbour Brahmadatta had driven from his kingdom and deprived of all his possessions. Years afterwards Long-grief and his wife were discovered in Benares, his enemy's capital, and Brahmadatta ordered them to be hewn in four pieces. Before the execution took place Long-life, their son, went up to his father Long-grief, who said to him: "My son Long-life, look not too far and not too near. For enmity comes not to an end by enmity, my son Long-life: by non-enmity, my son Long-life, enmity comes to an end." Long-life entered into the service of King Brahmadatta, and at last became his trusted friend. One day he went hunting with the king. They two were alone: Long-life had so managed that the retinue took another road. The king became tired, laid his head on Long-life's lap, and soon fell asleep. Thereupon thought the youth Long-life: "This king Brahmadatta has done us much evil. He has taken away our army, and baggage, and land, and treasure, and stores, and

King Brahmadatta's cruelty to King Long-grief.

Time and place favourable for revenge.

has killed my father and mother. Now is the time come to satisfy my enmity." Then he remembers his father's words and wonders what they mean. The king starts up from sleep: an evil dream has awakened him; he has dreamed that Long-life is taking his life with the sword. Then Long-life seized the head of the king, drew his sword, and said: "I am Long-life, O king, the son of king Long-grief whom you robbed and slew. Now is the time come for me to satisfy my enmity." Then the king, Brahmadatta, fell at the feet of the youth Long-life and said: "Grant me my life, my son Long-life." "How can I grant thee life, O king? It is thou, O king, who must grant me life." "Then grant thou me life, my son Long-life, and I will also grant thee life." Then they granted each other life, gave each other their hands and swore to do each other no harm. Afterwards they discussed the meaning of Long-grief's words: "For enmity comes not to an end by enmity, etc." Long-life explained it thus: "Thou, O king, hast killed my father and my mother. Were I now, O king, to seek to take thy life, then those who are attached to thee would take my life, and those who are attached to me would take their lives. Thus our enmity would not come to an end by enmity. But now, O king, thou hast granted me life, and I have granted thee life: thus by non-enmity has our enmity come to an end." And the king gave him all that had belonged to the father, army, and baggage, and land, and treasure, and store, and gave him his daughter to wife.

Long-life's self-restraint and the reason for it.

Long-life's great reward.

[*Mahavagga* x. 2. Oldenberg's translation (condensed.)]

Dr. Oldenberg adds the following comments: "While Buddhism enjoins the forgiveness of the wrongs which others have done us, we ought not to overlook the thought which incidentally peeps out from this moral, that in the dealings of the world forgiveness and reconciliation are a more profitable policy than revenge. The proposition that enmity comes not to an end by enmity is verified in a very substantial way in the case of the clever lad Long-life: instead of losing his life, he obtains a kingdom and a king's daughter to wife."

Dr. Oldenberg's illuminating comment on the story.

CHAPTER IX.

The Buddha's "Middle Way."

No exposition of the higher morality of Buddhism would be complete which omitted a consideration of the Buddha's "Middle Way." In his first great sermon at Benares, he describes the "Middle Way" in the following terms:

"Then the Exalted One spake to the five ascetics, saying: There are two extremes, O monks, from which he who leads a religious life must abstain. What are those two extremes? One is a life of pleasure, devoted to desire and enjoyment: that is base, ignoble, unspiritual, unworthy, unreal. The other is a life of mortification: it is gloomy, unworthy, unreal. The Perfect One, O monks, is removed from both these extremes, and has discovered the way which lies between them, the middle way, which enlightens the eyes, enlightens the mind, which leads to rest, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvana. And what, O monks, is this middle way, which the Perfect One has discovered? It is this Sacred Eightfold Path." (*Mahavagga* i. 6–10, seq. Oldenberg's "Buddha," pp. 127–8.) Then follows the well-known description of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Buddha defines the "Middle Way."

If we were asked to describe in a few words the results of following this "Middle Way," we would say: He who follows this way enjoys the greatest health of body and tranquillity of mind. He has got rid of his own

The benefits of following the middle way.

troubles, and he does not mix himself up with the troubles and sorrows of others He enjoys dreamless sleep and wakes refreshed. His life of harmlessness and detachment inclines other living beings, both human and non-human, to be friendly to him. His wants are few and easily supplied. He is no longer an actor in this world but only a spectator. He spends his time in meditation and enjoys a blissful peace which nothing can disturb. This "Middle Way" of the Buddha is almost identical with the Practical Ethics of Epicurus, of which I give the following synopsis from a book on Greek Philosophy. I have further condensed the account but nothing essential is omitted. (1) "We must not allow ourselves to be enslaved by any particular pleasure or desire. We must master our appetites. We must often forgo a pleasure if it leads to greater pain. We must be ready to undergo pain for the sake of a greater pleasure to come.

The "Middle Way" of Buddha compared with the Practical Ethics of Epicurus.

(2) "And it is just for this reason, secondly, that the Epicureans regarded spiritual and mental pleasures as far more important than those of the body. What was aimed at was above all a calm, untroubled mind, for the pleasures of the body are ephemeral, those of the spirit enduring. The Epicureans, like the Stoics, preached the necessity of superiority to bodily pains and external circumstances. So a man must not depend for his happiness upon externals; he must have his blessedness in his own self. Yet innocent pleasures of sense are neither forbidden, nor to be despised.

In both systems superiority to bodily pains and external cirumstances essential.

The wise man will enjoy whatever he can without harm.

(3) "Thirdly, the Epicurean ideal of pleasure tended rather towards a negative than a positive conception of it. They aimed rather at a negative absence of pain, at tranquillity, quiet, calm, repose of spirit, undisturbed by fears and anxieties. Positive happiness is beyond the reach of mortals. All that a man can hope for is to avoid pain, and to live in contentment.

Negative conception of happiness.

(4) "We should have as few needs as possible. Simplicity, cheerfulness, moderation, temperance, are the best means to happiness.

(5) "Lastly, the Epicurean ideal, though containing no possibility of an exalted nobility, was yet by no means entirely selfish. A kindly, benevolent temper appeared in these men. It is pleasanter, they said, to do a kindness than to receive one. There is little of the stern stuff of heroes, but there is much that is gentle and lovable, in the amiable moralizings of these butterfly-philosophers." (W. T. Stace, B.A., "Lectures on Greek Philosophy," pp. 360–363.)

Both shew a kindly, benevolent temper.

Anyone well acquainted with Buddhism, who happened to hear the above passage read, might easily believe it to be an account of the Buddha's "Middle Way."

We have now given the most careful consideration both to the ethical principles of Gotama Buddha, and to his practical directions for the conversion of these principles into actual conduct and character. But the question arises in our mind:

"What is the ultimate purpose of all this mental training and self-culture?" And the

answer is: "The cessation of becoming is the supreme object aimed at." In other words, the Buddhist devotee has done and suffered all these things in order to escape from existence—to avoid re-birth. The man who has attained to that "unshakable deliverance of the mind" has the assurance in his own heart that he will never be born again, that this is his last existence. He has purchased this freedom at the highest conceivable price—even at the price of his own "self," his individuality, yet he is content. As we read in the ancient Buddhist records:—

Final escape from re-birth, the Buddha's summum bonum.

"And how, ye monks, does a monk become an Holy One?"

"The dark night of I-ness, ye monks, is renounced by the monk; is cut off at the root; is made like a palm-tree stump, so that it can never more sprout again, can never more unfold itself."

The bliss of realizing the non-existence of the ego.

"Bliss of all bliss, joy of all joy is this,
"To leave behind the lie that says 'I am.'"

"To one who has once scented the odour of Nibbana, naught any more tastes good in earth or heaven. He clings to nothing; nothing clings to him. In peace profound and blest, he goes his way, like the clouds through the blue of heaven. He lives in one single thought: 'I am free; I am utterly delivered from this delusion of desire, from this delusion of existence. For me the round of re-birth is wholly at an end.' For so the Blessed One taught: For those who are delivered by perfect wisdom—for these there is change no more for ever." (Paul Dahlke, "Buddhist Essays," pp. 96–97.)

CHAPTER X.

Is Nirvana itself an Illusion?

But when we come to examine the Buddha's "Way of Escape" with a critical eye, even this doubtful blessing of Nirvana is seen to be illusion. Nirvana can only be attained by the "cessation of desire," by ceasing to will; not by giving up evil desire merely, but by giving up all desire: good desire just as much as evil desire binds one to the "Wheel of Life" and produces re-birth. If you can conceive of a perfect man, refraining from all evil, and doing good all his days, that man's good deeds will produce Karma just as surely as another man's evil deeds, and the good man must be reborn to receive the rewards of those good deeds. The Buddhist ideal man is a man who lives without any desire—good desire or evil desire—a man who has ceased to will, who is no longer an actor in the world, but a mere indifferent spectator; in a word, a man emotionless, quiescent, without sensibility. The nearest approach to this ideal is found in those Indian fakirs and sanyasis who remain seated on one spot for years with heart and pulse scarcely beating and shewing few signs of life. Such men eat and drink what is brought to them in a mechanical way, and, if food is not brought, they can live without it for days on end. Such men have come as near to extinguishing life, without really dying, as we can conceive of. They have little more sensibility than a man in a hypnotic trance, and, indeed, exist in a

Good desire just as much as evil desire produces re-birth.

semi-trance state most of the time. But there must be some lucid moments even in such a man's life, when he may be said to desire and will, if only in the feeblest way, so that even he does not completely fulfil the Buddhist ideal. Such a description, however, does not in any sense apply to Gotama Buddha. He was too big and humane a man to be explained by his philosophy. It was a cloak altogether too narrow and mean to cover him. It is absurd to speak of him as "a man living without desire, without willing." On the contrary, we know that he lived very happily, enjoying to the full many of the good things of life. He was surrounded by friends who loved him, and whom he loved (notwithstanding his philosophy). He delighted in beautiful scenery, enjoyed good food, bathing, cleanliness of person and clothes. Moreover, he entered with zest into discussions with disciples and opponents. He tells us that he followed the "Middle Way" between asceticism and excess, and he recommended this way to his disciples. The "Middle Way" which the Buddha trod has much to commend it. He shewed true wisdom when he taught that the man who could control his mind and senses was the true ascetic, and not the man who merely tortured his body. In fact this practical teaching of the Buddha is characterized by homely wisdom and common sense. None the less the life that he advocated cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be regarded as a life of severance from the world and freedom from desire. The Indian asceticism, which he despised and repudiated, approxi-

The Buddha greater than his philosophy.

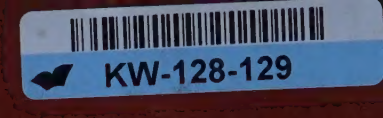
The "Middle Way" between asceticism and excess to be recommended.

mates much more nearly to the ideal of the desireless, non-willing, quiescent life demanded by his philosophy. His philosophy is built up upon Karma, and there is no room in the Karmic system for either his " Middle Way " or Nirvana. Karma and Nirvana are incompatible, and reason demands that Buddhism should abandon one or the other; it cannot consistently hold on to both. Karma teaches that all deeds produce consequences—there is no such thing as a neutral deed—and the consequences must be borne by the doer. Again, not only evil desire but all desire causes re-birth. Strictly there is no good desire—all desire is evil because it causes clinging and leads to continuance of existence. Hence Nirvana is a delusion. Men enveloped in misery, in constant terror of re-birth, catch at the theory of the cessation of becoming as a drowning man catches at a straw, but it is all in vain. The wish is father to the thought, but the wish cannot make the thought come true. So the Buddhist is thrown back upon Karma which knows no mercy. According to the theory of Karma every thought, every deed is a new thong re-binding men to the wheel of life. By retributive suffering we may be freed at one point, but by our fresh thoughts and deeds we re-bind ourselves at another point, and so can never hope really to get free, seeing that we cannot cease from desiring, and thinking, and doing. Therefore we are fated to revolve on the " wheel," world cycle after world cycle, for ever; and re-birth, disease, old age, death, and re-birth once more,

Karma and Nirvana incompatible and mutually exclusive.

The Karmic system holds out no hope for man—not even the negative hope of non-existence.

with all its attendant miseries, can never come to an end. Buddhism holds out no hope for man—even the negative hope of non-existence has turned out to be a delusion.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